

# Ontario Connects: Bringing High-Speed Internet to Every Community

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CONFIDENTIAL

# Ontario's high-speed internet challenge

High-speed internet has become an essential form of infrastructure and the people of Ontario expect access to fast and reliable broadband and cellular services.

- It is estimated that up to 700,000 households and businesses in Ontario do not have access to minimum service levels of high-speed internet (50/10 Megabits per second or Mbps), to learn or work from home, access virtual care, or connect with families and friends.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of broadband infrastructure as accessing online service is integral to enabling all people in Ontario to participate in an increasingly digital world.
- The pandemic has put businesses, students and vulnerable populations in underserved communities at a greater disadvantage.

# The opportunity

## Impact of broadband access

### Economic Sectors

Global competitiveness in a digital world. Increased sector contribution to economic growth, including to green economy.

### Communities / Municipalities

Increased attraction for people and businesses, and support for economic activity.

### Firms / Businesses

Improved productivity, efficiency and competitiveness. e.g., advanced manufacturing and finance.

### Consumers / Households

Enhanced knowledge, skills and networks. Improved access to services and standard of living.

- Investment in broadband infrastructure is a key element of the government's plan to create growth and build the foundation for a strong economic recovery.
- Access to reliable broadband aids in establishing Ontario as a leader in the adoption of critical technologies to support a more digital society and supports communities by:
  - Providing continuity by enabling work, learning, business and connecting from home.
  - Supporting local businesses in expanding their markets and responding to increasingly digital demands.
  - Protecting jobs and creating positive impacts to the health and well-being of the community.
  - Supporting access to health, education and financial services.

# Our Commitment

Ontario has committed to ensuring that every household and business in the province has access to high-speed internet (50/10Mbps) by the end of 2025.

- A historic investment of nearly \$4 billion in funding-based programs and projects for unserved and underserved communities across the province.
- The accelerated approach to supporting broadband infrastructure deployment includes policy and regulatory changes that are aligned with transformative initiatives to create a more effective and responsive provincial government.
- Our approach will support appropriate technological solutions to provide sustainable broadband infrastructure to maintain service level standards that meet today's needs as well as the expected technological demands of tomorrow.

# Up to Speed: Ontario's Broadband and Cellular Action Plan

Ontario has committed nearly **\$4 billion** to bring access to reliable high-speed internet to every community across the province



## Four Pillars of Action



### 1. DELIVER

*Work with regional partners on shovel-ready projects to expand access.*



### 2. INVEST

*Launch provincial investment program.*



### 3. MAXIMIZE

*Expand existing programs and make better use of government assets.*



### 4. MODERNIZE

*Make it easier for government and the private sector to deliver broadband projects.*

# Deliver

**Commitment:** Ontario will work with partners to deliver regional and shovel-ready projects that will expand broadband and cellular access in Southwestern, Eastern and Northern Ontario

Project	Description/Status
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- In 2019 Ontario invested \$63.7 million to partner with the federal government and Southwestern Ontario Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) to bring greater connectivity to Southwestern Ontario.
- SWIFT has awarded 96 contracts totalling \$268 million in broadband infrastructure investments to connect more than 63,000 households and businesses across the region to high-speed internet.



- In 2020 Ontario invested \$71 million to partner with the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) and the federal government on a \$300 million public-private partnership to improve cell services across the region.
- Rogers Communications was selected through a competitive bidding process to improve coverage and capacity of cell networks in Eastern Ontario.
- The project is currently underway. To date, upgrades to 89 existing telecommunication tower sites have already been completed, with new tower construction on schedule to begin early this year.

<b>NORTHERN ONTARIO</b>	• The Ministry moved ahead with 7 shovel-ready projects totaling \$40.9 million in Ontario that will directly enable high-speed internet for over 7,000 homes and businesses in several municipalities and First Nations communities.
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# Invest

**Commitment:** Invest in broadband and cellular infrastructure: Ontario will launch a provincial broadband infrastructure program.

- Ontario launched the Improving Connectivity (ICON) Program in July 2020 to help connect more homes and businesses with high-speed internet in areas of need.
- ICON has committed support to 35 different broadband projects totalling close to \$125 million in provincial investment.
- In July 2021, Ontario announced a partnership with the federal government to support an additional 41 projects in Ontario for a total investment of over \$500 million to expand access to high-speed internet across the province.
- On August 6, 2021, Ontario also announced an investment of more than \$109 million in Telesat's next-generation Low Earth Orbit satellite network, to meet future demand for high-speed connectivity.
- Through shovel ready projects and new investments, Ontario has committed over \$900 million to date, improving broadband and cellular connectivity in underserved areas and enabling access to high-speed internet for nearly 375,000 premises.

# Invest: Accelerated High Speed Internet Program (AHSIP)

- To connect the remaining underserved and unserved communities across the province, Infrastructure Ontario (IO) is leading a new, innovative procurement process launched in Summer 2021.
- This transparent and competitive process will enable Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to bid for provincial subsidies through a series of reverse auction events for defined geographic areas, and based upon requirements for high-speed internet infrastructure deployment.
- IO has qualified [51 Internet Service Providers](#) (ISPs) to respond to a Request for Proposals (RFP) to support accelerated high-speed internet expansion in the province.
- Subject to the outcomes of the post-auction due diligence and validation phase, successful proponents for the geographic lots/service areas are expected to be announced in Spring 2022.

<https://www.infrastructureontario.ca/Ontario-Connects/>



## Maximize/Modernize: Reducing barriers to deployment

- [The Supporting Broadband and Infrastructure Expansion Act, 2021 \(SBIEA\)](#) was introduced in April 2021 to accelerate timely deployment of provincial designated projects in unserved and underserved communities in Ontario.
- [The Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021 \(BBFA\)](#) provides authority to the Minister of Infrastructure to reduce barriers to deployment of broadband-related infrastructure.
- Regulation-making authorities under the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 (OEBA) can reduce barriers for telecom providers to use existing electricity assets, such as hydro poles, to expand access to broadband, while reducing the costs to do so.
- The Statement of Intent outlines proposed legislative amendments, regulations, and additional mechanisms to enhance enabling authorities and compliance mechanisms to accelerate deployment of high-speed internet infrastructure.

## Building Broadband Faster Act Guideline

On November 30 2021, Ontario released the Building Broadband Faster Act Guideline to support implementation of the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021 (BBFA).

The Guideline is designed to reduce barriers that are currently preventing the timely deployment of reliable, high-speed internet infrastructure.

To enhance compliance with the Guideline, proposed regulations are being drafted under the BBFA and OEBA. A regulation under the OEBA including a new wireline pole attachment charge became effective January 1, 2022.

# Modernize: Statement of Intent

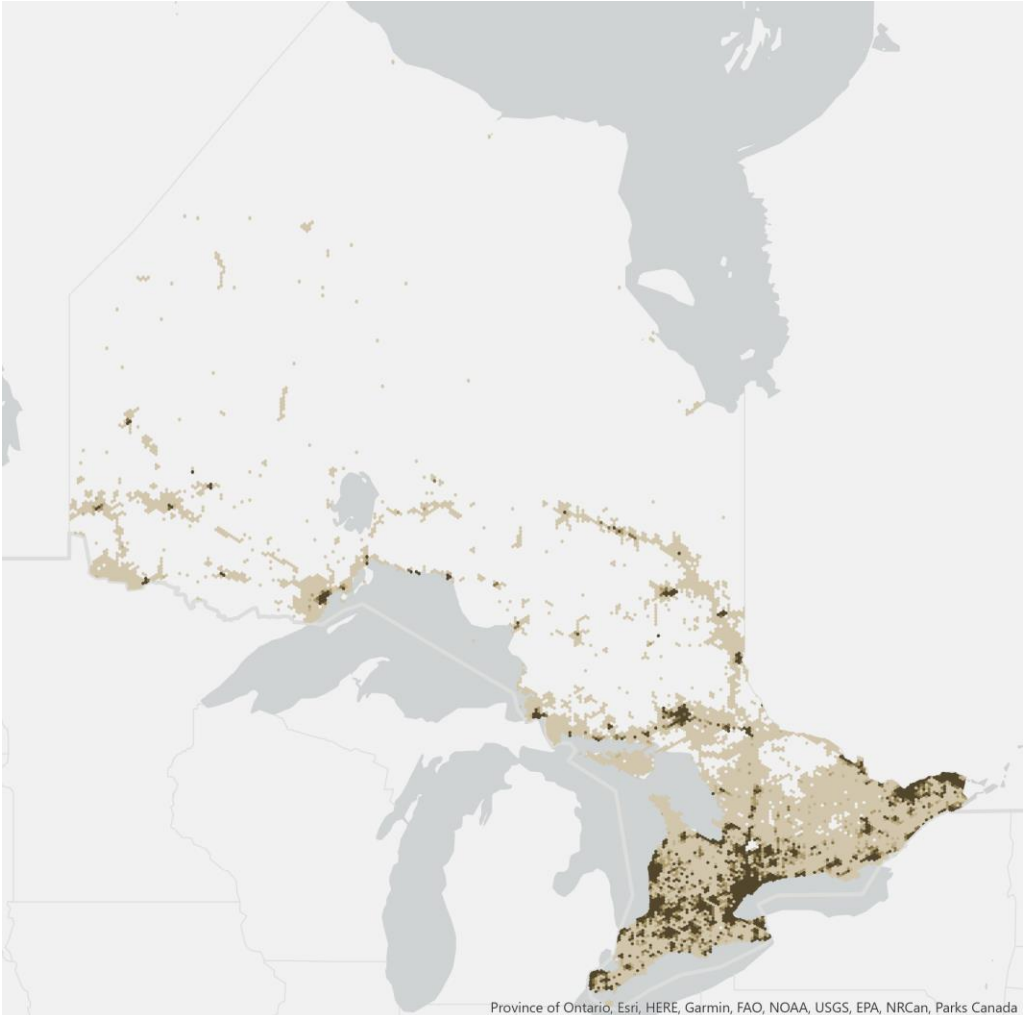
- To provide confidence and certainty to broadband partners, in November 2021, the government issued a Statement of Intent as part of the Guideline.
- The Statement outlines proposed legislative amendments, regulations, and additional mechanisms that will, if passed, enhance enabling authorities and compliance mechanisms to accelerate deployment of high-speed internet infrastructure.
- The Ministry of Infrastructure will be engaging further to inform the legislative amendments.

## Overview of the Statement of Intent

- **Legislative measures** to be introduced in Winter 2022, consistent with the Guideline, to:
  - Hold municipalities to new service timelines to grant or deny right-of-way permits.
  - Require infrastructure data sharing by municipalities and other parties, through the Broadband One Window (BOW).
  - Require the use of the Broadband One Window by municipalities.
  - Require electronic asset data sharing by Ontario One Call members.
  - Streamline locate processes for underground infrastructure.
- Additional mechanisms, including technical assistance, informal dispute resolution, and inter-ministerial oversight.

# Coordinated and accelerated action to achieve 100% coverage

BEFORE PROVINCIAL INVESTMENTS



AFTER PROVINCIAL INVESTMENTS



\*These maps show what proportion of populated areas have access to high-speed internet (50/10 mbps). Lighter brown are population areas with less access to high-speed internet. The government is on track to bring better internet to everyone in the province by the end of 2025.

# Next steps



These policy tools are being proposed now as the timing aligns with the onset of significant number of high-speed internet projects. Broadband stakeholders participating in these and future projects would benefit from the certainty that the government is doing all it can to remove traditional barriers to internet deployment so that every community in this province have access to high-speed internet by the end of 2025.

MOI and its partners are actively consulting on the proposed legislative measures before bringing forward amendments.

MOI will continue to engage with partners, including municipalities to support legislative and regulatory development, and implementation of the accelerated broadband deployment.

# We want to hear from you

Municipalities will play an expanded role in ensuring the timely deployment of broadband infrastructure projects.

1. What are the greatest challenges to broadband expansion in your community? How is your community currently working to address them?
2. What type of additional information or resources does your municipality need to support broadband expansion?
3. What challenges, if any, do you anticipate in providing electronic data?
4. What is the typical timeframe for municipal permits, concurrences, or approvals for a broadband project?
5. What types of resources or assistance could help your municipality comply with the proposed service standard, and the requirement to provide asset data proactively and electronically?

**Let us know:**

[broadband@ontario.ca](mailto:broadband@ontario.ca)